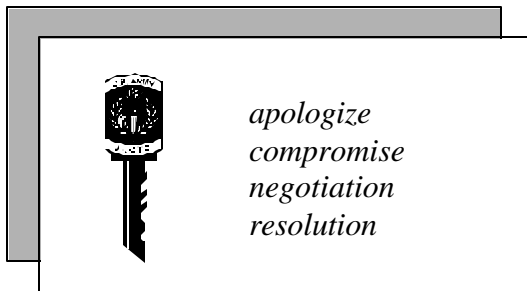


## LESSON 2: FINDING SOLUTIONS: CONFLICT AND BEHAVIOR



### INTRODUCTION

The success or failure of any conflict **resolution** depends on the attitudes and behaviors of the people involved in the conflict. Those skills, which promote positive, non-violent, conflict resolution, are:

- Awareness of others
- Awareness of the distinctions between self and others
- Listening skills
- **Compromise**
- Ability to express one's own thoughts and feelings
- Ability to respond to the feelings of others

These are skills that you will need to develop throughout your life. Although, conflict is inevitable, you have control over your own response to the situation, and your actions can either diffuse or escalate the conflict. Remember that if you react defensively, or judgmentally, it can trigger the same response in others.

## WINNING COLORS<sup>®</sup> AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Effective communication skills are a key factor in the conflict resolution process. Sometimes, in order to resolve a conflict, you need to go beyond your own comfort zone of preferred behaviors to facilitate good communications with the other party.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, Winning Colors<sup>®</sup> is an assessment tool, which is used to classify behaviors into four dominant categories:

- **Planners.** Planners are quiet, and introspective. They like to be correct and are very detail oriented. They have excellent listening skills. They are calm, cool, and collected on the outside. They are likely to hide their feelings.
- **Builders.** Builders are natural leaders. They are up front with people, expressing themselves openly and directly. They like rules, law, order, and direction, and do not hesitate to tell other what they should do. Builders are typically punctual, dependable, and loyal.
- **Relaters.** Relaters are very social. They want to be liked and they love to talk. Relaters share their ideas and feelings readily. They work well in teams and need to be shown appreciation.
- **Adventurers.** Adventures are action oriented. They are bored unless there is fun, excitement, and things are moving. They live in the present. They are flexible and thrive on spontaneity, and do not like structure.

Using an assessment tool like, Winning Colors<sup>®</sup> will not only help you evaluate your own behavioral strengths and weaknesses, but

it will also give you valuable insights into the behavioral characteristics of the people you interact with on a daily basis. Surely, no one is going to walk up to you and say, “My name is Bob and I’m an Adventurer,” so you will have to listen carefully, and observe clues in the other person’s body language and speech patterns.

With insight and awareness, you will be able to adapt your communication skills, and behavior, to be able to negotiate a peaceful solution to a conflict.

## HOT BUTTONS

By observing and identifying the behavioral characteristics and tendencies in others, you can determine how to best communicate with them to resolve a conflict. For instance, some people respond better to facts and figures, while others are more concerned with feelings and emotions. “Hot buttons” are strategies that you can use to communicate in a way in which the other person is more likely to hear you, understand you, and respond positively. In other words, it is important that both persons involved in a conflict “speak the same language.” To illustrate this metaphor, imagine trying to **negotiate** a settlement if you were speaking English and the other party was speaking Chinese. You would not get very far.

When you are speaking to someone who exhibits *planner* behaviors, you succeed by using *planner* ‘hot buttons’. The same is true if you wish to communicate successfully with those who most clearly exhibit *builder*, *relater*, and *adventurer* behaviors.

### HOT BUTTONS FOR PLANNERS

- Take a serious approach.
- Show interest, be patient, calm, and collected.

- Give ample warning before confronting them with a conflict.
- Supply details and allow more time for decisions.
- Try not to impose time constraints.
- Respond in terms of causes rather than exterior effects.
- Be prepared for interior understanding rather than exterior caring.
- Show that you are competent and striving to understand the subject.
- Be a good listener and sounding board.
- Avoid silly talk and babbling.
- Respond with new and innovative ideas.

### HOT BUTTONS FOR BUILDERS

- Take a bottom-line approach.
- Explain directions step-by-step.
- Let them know what is expected of them.
- Do not repeat unless requested to do so.
- Be concise and clear in your speech.
- Know the hierarchy of command and give it proper deference.
- Look for law, order, and routine.
- Make sure your actions deliver results.
- Be prepared.

### HOT BUTTONS FOR RELATERS

- Take a friendly approach.
- Talk in a personal way and volunteer to help out.
- Show genuine concern, smile, and be kind.
- Respect their feelings by not imposing your feelings on them.

- Show personal appreciation.
- Give them opportunity to express themselves.
- Validate their emotions and feelings.

### *HOT BUTTONS FOR ADVENTURERS*

- Take a light-hearted/fun/action approach.
- Move it; be an action-centered person.
- Keep the discussion in the here and now.
- Be willing to change and be flexible.
- Show you are competitive and a winner.
- The more spontaneous you are, the more you will be appreciated.
- Having an easy-come-easy-go manner with good humor wins you points.
- Give immediate results or feedback whenever possible.
- Avoid theoretic explanations.
- Create result-oriented action plans consistent with common goals.

### **EVALUATING CONSEQUENCES**

Your response to a conflict should not be a “knee-jerk” reaction, but rather a carefully considered response. It is important to think through the consequences of your behaviors before you act on them. If you act hastily, in anger, your behavior may add fuel to the fire and conflict could escalate to violence.

One method of analyzing a response to a conflict is to list three or more alternative solutions at the top of a sheet of paper. Then record all of the positive and negative consequences of each option. This forces you to take the time to brainstorm, and predict all the possible outcomes you could expect. The result will be a more reasonable and well thought out response.

Your goal should be to agree on a non-violent solution in which both party's needs are met. Remember, if the conflict is over something trivial, or if you will not have contact with the person again, you could choose to ignore the conflict or to **apologize** to settle it peacefully.

### **CONCLUSION**

Effective communications are essential to successful conflict resolution and negotiation. Sometimes we misinterpret what others say, or vice versa. However, if we practice self-awareness, and seek to understand others, we will be much more successful in maintaining healthy relationships. Understanding your own communications style and being able to appreciate others, and adjust accordingly, will enable you to resolve conflicts successfully.